

Message Text

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SUBJ: SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM'S NEWS BRIEFING
ON THE SAHEL

REF: USUN 805

1. SYG WALDHEIM'S NEWS BRIEFING OF MARCH 7 CONTAINED
COMMENTS ABOUT THE SAHEL, REPORTED AS FOLLOWS (SEE
REFTEL FOR SUMMARY ENTIRE NEWS BRIEFING):

2 BEGIN QUOTE

UNITED NATIONS, MAR. 7--THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, REPORTS
UN SECRETARY-GENERAL KURT WALDHEIM, MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ALERTED
SOON ENOUGH AS TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SAHELIAN DROUGHT.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL WHO RETURNED TO NEW YORK THIS WEEK
FOLLOWING A VISIT OF 14 WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES TOLD UN NEWSMEN
MARCH 7, "I KNOW THAT THERE HAVE BEEN CRITICISMS AS TO THE
RESPONSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THIS DISASTER; AND
IT MAY WELL BE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY
ALERT AT AN EARLY STAGE AS TO THE MAGNITUDE AND SERIOUSNESS OF THE
PROBLEM. CERTAINLY THE GOVERNMENTS THEMSELVES MUST ALWAYS HAVE
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HOPED THAT THE CHANGED CLIMATIC CONDITIONS, WHICH ARE A BASIC

CAUSE OF THE DISASTER, WOULD IMPORVE."

HE NOTED THAT THE PEOPLE IN THE NORTHERN AREAS OF THE AFFLICTED COUNTRIES WHERE THE DROUGHT HIT HARDEST DID NOT MOVE SOUTHWARDS UNTIL AFTER THREE OR FOUR YEARS OF CONTINUOUS DROUGHT-- BELIEVING IN THE MAINTIME THE RAIN WOULD COME THE FOLLOWING SEASON.

MR. WALDHEIM SAID HE PERSONALLY INSPECTED "THE TOLL IN HUMAN SUFFERING, THE DEPLETION OF RESOURCES AND THE SETBACK TO DEVELOPMENT PLANS CAUSED BY THIS TERRIBLE DROUGHT" AND NOTED: "ALTHOUGH GREAT EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, IT WILL TAKE A BOLD INTERNATIONAL EFFORT OF ENORMOUS SCOPE TO MITIGATE THE PRESENT SUFFERING AND TO PROVIDE FOR A BETTER FUTURE."

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL SAW FOOD AND OTHER EMERGENCY SUPPLIES PILING UP IN THE CITIES AND OTHER CENTRAL POINTS, UNABLE TO MOVE INTO THE AREAS WHERE THEY ARE MOST REQUIRED. AIRPORT RUNWAYS ARE TORN UP, ROADS LEADING NORTH DEAD-END INTO SAND, "SAND IS EVERYWHERE," AND THERE AREN'T ENOUGH TRUCKS TO TRANSPORT THE SUPPLIES. "CERTAINLY THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF THESE COUNTRIES WAS NOT PREPARED TO CARRY THE BURDEN OF SUCH A VAST EMERGENCY," HE EXPLAINED.

NEVERTHELESS, HE ADDED, HE WITNESSED "SOME OF TH ENORMOUS EFFORT THAT HAS BEEN MADE AND IS BEING MADE, BILATERALLY AND THROUGH EFFORTS COORDINATED BY THE FOOD AND AGRIBULTURAL ORGANIZATION (FAO) TO BRING RELIEF TO THIS AREA."

AT THE MEETING OF THE INTERSTATE COMMITTEE OF THE DROUGHT AFFLICTED COUNTRIES IN OUAGADOUGOU, THE SECRETARY GENERAL PRESENTED A COMPENDIUM OF 123 PROJECTS DESIGNED TO BRING ABOUT RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION. HE INDICATED AT THE UN CONFERENCE THESE PROJECTS INCLUDE IRRIGATION PROJECTS, HIGH DAMS, ROAD CONSTRUCTION, AND WELLS.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL APPEALED TO THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES INVOLVED TO COORDINATE THEIR EFFORTS AND TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO INCREASE THEIR ASSISTANCE IN MEETING THE

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CURRENT EMERGENCY AND THE LONGER-TERM NEEDS.

HE HAS INSTRUCTED UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL BRADFORD MORSE TO VISIT ELEVEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO GENERATE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT. MR. MORSE WILL VISIT OTHER COUNTRIES LATER. IN A FURTHER EFFOGT MR. WALDHEIM SENT UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL DJERMAKOYE, TOGETHER WITH A FAO REPRESENTATIVE, TO THOSE AREAS WHICH HE WAS UNABLE TO INSPECT PERSONALLY DUE

TO ADVERSE WEATHER AND TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS. UNQTE.
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